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ARMAMENTS AND ARBITRATION

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To those who are accustomed to note European news with somewhat more particularity than is given by the cable despatches of the American press, it must have appeared a singular coincidence that along with the telegraphic message conveying the now famous speech of Sir Edward Grey, the British Secretary of Foreign Affairs, advocating unlimited arbitration between Great Britain and the United States, there arrived by mail the detailed information that the German Parliament had passed the bill for an annual increase of their already formidable army, for each succeeding year, up to and including 1916.

The vote for this significant measure stood 247 to 63, or, put in terms more readily comprehended at a glance, as four to one; and the small minority was composed, with only three exceptions, of Socialists and Poles,* the latter of whom stand in relation to the German Government much as the Nationalist party of Ireland stands toward Great Britain—permanently disaffected as long as present conditions last.

It may be fairly said, therefore, after making all allowance for the peculiar state of the franchise in the chief state

*To be perfectly exact, it should be mentioned that there were eleven abstentions; a fact which makes a very different impression according as it is stated that there were eleven or that there were *only* eleven.

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of the Empire—Prussia—that this increase of the army is a popular measure; that it is not merely the act of a government, esteemed by many to be arbitrary and self-willed, but the voice of a mighty people, satisfied for the time being that the national interests require augmentation of an army already proverbial for numbers and efficiency; an army which may fairly be said to hold the casting vote, when opposing European forces approach equality even remotely.

It is unnecessary here to enumerate the occasions on which this force has been exerted, or where it has been checked by other combinations, within the ten years past; but it is well to note the general fact that organized military force, even when used, does not necessarily mean war in its horrors. It is war without bloodshed; a result which is the great and only real justification of military preparation. Witness the American War of Secession, with its immense losses. In this both sides stood at the beginning without any preparation, as compared with the immense development and organization, military and naval, which the course of the contest brought into being. The German Empire, which owes its existence to its army, has, thanks also to its army, known forty years of unbroken peace, of the sheathed sword.

Not the least striking feature of this new accumulation of armament in the midst of peace is that it is for a term of coming years during which there is no certainty, even under a continuance of peace conditions, that the revenue will meet the consequent increased expenditure. To quote a phrase attributed recently to an American statesman, this may be bad economics; yet it is evidently considered good politics. But it is not for the army only that debt, or the possibility of debt, is contemplated. The huge advance in tonnage, and in size of ships, of the German navy is being met by the same resource. Broadly stated, without taking account of the details of ordinary and extraordinary expenditure, the bill for new naval construction, as distinguished from running expenses, is met by loans; by an annual increase of debt. By this means Germany has progressed to the second place among the naval powers of the world; being exceeded only by Great Britain, which so far pays for its naval ship-building out of current revenue. It seems scarcely necessary to say that, after all allowance for wealth still much exceeding that of Germany, Great

Britain owes this ability to her watery bulwarks, which enable her to depend upon a much less numerous army. It is also, perhaps, worth noting that the immense debt of Great Britain was contracted in establishing, by military means, the territorial, commercial, and industrial conditions which underlay her long-continued financial supremacy; that the debt was in the nature of an investment, not barren of returns.

In the British House of Commons, the First Lord of the Admiralty, the civil head of the British Navy—corresponding to our Secretary of the Navy—has within a few days (March 16th) stated, in answer to a question, that according to the programmes so far adopted, Great Britain on April 1st, 1914, would have completed 22 Dreadnoughts and 9 Invincibles; Germany, 16 Dreadnoughts, 5 Invincibles; the United States, 12 Dreadnoughts, no Invincibles. The word Dreadnought from a proper noun has become a common, significant of a class; and its meaning, as the generally adopted type of efficient battleship, is understood widely, if loosely. Invincible is undergoing a like modification. It means a battleship of Dreadnought proportions, but of inferior offensive and defensive powers; these qualities having been lessened in order to give much higher speed on the same tonnage. The type is essentially that known hitherto as the “armored cruiser.” The United States does not contemplate Invincibles; rightly, as I believe, for I conceive the class to be a hybrid, with the drawbacks attributed to the crossing of species, that they combine the defects rather than the virtues of their progenitors. Still, Invincibles are undoubtedly formidable vessels, even if those be right who think them a mistake, as substitutes for an equivalent tonnage in Dreadnoughts. They are very much to be taken account of. The preponderance of German Dreadnoughts over American, 16 to 12, will be very seriously increased by the addition of five Invincibles.

These figures, however, are only to April 1st, 1914. The peculiarity of the German naval legislation is that, while dependent upon successive annual votes, it provides at one cast a programme for several future years. In consequence of this prevision, there can be, and is, coincident and harmonious progress in ship-construction, dockyard development, armaments, and ship-building plants. The great manufacturers know upon what to count, and can afford to spend

on facilities money which they are assured they will get back in employment. The agitated question of one annual battleship, or two, or three, according to the various views of executive and legislature, in Great Britain or the United States, does not trouble the German employer of naval labor. The state is as much committed to its naval payments as the other countries are to the interest upon their debts.

The result has been, in Germany, a great increase, not only of ships but of power to build, both in quantity and in rapidity; so that it is a somewhat moot question whether Germany cannot, so far as facilities go, build as rapidly and as numerous as her richer rival. Great Britain can no longer surrender a start, as the hare did to the tortoise. Her immense programme of new construction for the present year is due to the fact that, dallying some years ago with vague ideals of international agreements, she is now straining to recover the consequences of her nap, to regain a safe lead; for her security depends, not upon land forces to defend her soil against an enemy once on shore, but upon power to prevent his transit and his landing.

In the course of the debate above cited, the First Lord, replying to members of his own party, the Liberal, who objected to the proposed expenditures as exorbitant and unnecessary, said that if they intended to support a reduction, he would remind them of the fate of Ethelred the Unready; and he added, amid loud cheering, that a strong navy was a good foundation upon which to build up financial credit. This can only be by securing freedom from war, or, in case of war, the security for industry and commerce which a navy effects; thus ensuring the foundations of financial stability. Incidentally, the indemnities which have become a frequent incident of peace treaties, are averted by the same precaution. The present annual expenditure of the United States upon the navy is one-eighth the war indemnity exacted from France by Germany after one year of hostilities, and one-fifth that which Japan endeavored to obtain from Russia. The motion to reduce was rejected in the British Parliament by 276 to 56.

The naval programme of Germany, when completed in 1920, will provide 38 "capital" ships; much the greater part of which will be of Dreadnought type, though some pre-Dreadnought vessels will probably still survive a few years longer. What is the significance of these conditions, in a state which

up to a generation ago was non-naval? Many reasons probably concur to one result. The industries and commerce, and not least the shipping trade of Germany, are in their present proportions a growth of thirty years, which has by no means reach its limit.

All these elements of national prosperity depend upon free use of the sea; and the expansion of the navy results from the conviction that it must be so powerful that even Great Britain, menacing as her geographical situation is to Germany, and huge as is her fleet, will hesitate to withstand any policy on which Germany is set; will limit herself to her own protection, and that of the colonies and interests which belong to her. This political situation is to be reinforced by a large development of the fleet of Austria-Hungary, operative, as distinctly avowed, only in the Mediterranean, a principal line of British communications—imperial, colonial, and commercial. Here also increased national indebtedness is accepted deliberately, if anxiously. The number of Dreadnoughts, proposed as the goal by the Naval Secretary, is sixteen; of which four are in hand.

A century ago, a very distinguished Swiss military writer, who saw much service throughout the Napoleonic period, who studied minutely many of the principal campaigns, and who reflected profoundly upon international relations as affecting war, and as affected by it, stated as a fundamental necessity of the European Balance of Power that no one State should be permitted to acquire an unchallengeable naval superiority. He had witnessed personally, and had appreciated, the decisive influence exerted over the whole conflict, continental as well as maritime, by the naval supremacy of Great Britain, and by the insular wealth consequent upon the naval shield extended over her commerce and industries. To-day the realization of his proposition is seen in the serious anxieties of Great Britain; challenged by a fleet, and by a possible combination of fleets, which, even though they may not together equal hers, may so endanger her superiority and her commerce as largely to limit her freedom of action in support of policies which otherwise may to her appear advisable, or even essential.

The proposition of a century ago related only to Europe; but it has expanded, not by original forecast, but by inevitable growth, like the American Monroe Doctrine, so that it now fills the larger field of the world. The balances of power

in Europe a hundred years since, constituted after the fall of Napoleon, were largely artificial; and consequently were not only complicated, but deficient in stability, because some of the larger units, the great Powers, lacked homogeneity, or lacked completeness of territory, both which deficiencies are sources of unrest. In the intervening century progress has been made in eliminating these factors of discord. Austria has been separated from the greater part of Italy left under her control in 1815; and Italian unity has not only been consummated, but comprises almost all the territory racially and geographically Italian. Germany has achieved unity and expanded to limits which were by Bismarck considered commensurate to her claims and her needs. Austria, cut short in former ambitions in the direction of Italy, has made progress on the other side of the Adriatic. Although composed of elements proverbially discordant, she has held together for a time which gives promise of permanence. This is the more sure because the conditions are reinforced by a pressure on all sides, which necessitates the cohesion under one government of the various communities composing the Empire, unless they wish to sink severally to the international insignificance which characterizes their Balkan neighbors.

These three great States, of comparatively recent origin as regards their present extent and constitution, and formally in alliance between themselves, are in a position to give effect to that challenge to British sea power which by the Swiss writer quoted was declared essential. And they are doing it. All parties in Great Britain except the so-called Labor party, which is distinctly *doctrinaire* in its views and policies, recognize that the question of national well-being is at stake; how much more the weight of Great Britain in the policies of the external world, in which a hundred years ago she occupied the decisive position. It is an odd circumstance that, at the very moment the Labor party in the British Parliament is opposing measures believed by most in the country necessary for national independence of action, the party of the same name in Australia, now controlling the government, defiantly announces that on certain points it will not admit arbitration, and that national defense is a prime element in its policy in order to insure national control of internal measures; that is, national independence.

These factors serve to link together in the appreciation

of men the interrelation of the situation in Europe with the politics of the world. Great Britain cannot divest herself of responsibilities and policies external to the British Islands, except at the sacrifice of national interests and the acceptance of permanent degradation of national position. If the relative sea powers of Great Britain and of the three States of central Europe, which, if not opposed to her formally, nevertheless do stand in the opposite scale of the balance, were a matter of European international policies merely, the inhabitants of other continents might view the situation with unconcern, though with interest. But in the infancy of Australian development the dependence of Australia upon British control of the sea illustrates the far-reaching character of this element of European international relations.

If this were the only illustration it might be relegated to the class of rare exceptions which fail to prove a rule, but it does not stand alone. Five years ago the sea power of Great Britain, by depriving Russia of naval allies, assured to Japan control of the sea. Can a similar effect continue to be exercised in view of the growing challenge to British naval supremacy? It is one thing to insure security against attack; it is quite another to be strong enough to insure national policy in matters of external effort.

A notable additional illustration is to be found in the Boer War of 1899-1901. The feeling of the Continent was with the Boers; it is useless now to recall the many manifestations of this bias, but the superiority of the British Navy was such that interference was impossible. The result, superficially, was the overthrow of two small republics. Fundamentally it secured the opportunity for several distinct and rival communities, in this respect somewhat resembling the Balkan States or those of Central America, to take a fresh start; and under the harmonizing influence of British political traditions to form a union such as that of the American thirteen colonies or of the confederation which preceded the present German Empire.

This beneficial outcome is noteworthy, but the illustration of changed conditions of sea power is yet more impressive, because this localized disturbance in British imperial relations was precisely the kind of occurrence to which an empire so constituted is always liable, as in the case of the Indian mutiny of 1857. Standing alone, the British Islands may be able to defend their independence and commerce, to make an

enemy ware of them; it is when called upon to repress disorder, or to oppose attack in some distant part of the Empire, that the margin of naval superiority adequate to maintain peace or to protect the home country may prove insufficient. If so, the entire imperial system may break down.

The forefront of this danger is unquestionably Germany. How far she is immediately the incentive to the proposed great increase of the Austrian Navy to sixteen Dreadnoughts or how far this measure is due to an Austrian determination to equal or surpass her ally, Italy, in control of their buffer sea, the Adriatic, it is impossible to say. Nor is it very necessary, for facts which can be seen, rather than purposes which can only be surmised, are the elements of power to be weighed and appreciated. The sympathies of nations fluctuate with their interests or with passing events, and their purposes vary accordingly. I remember when, in 1866, an American squadron was saluted in Chile as a savior. In 1891 the seamen of an American ship of war were mobbed through the streets of Valparaiso because of popular feeling excited against their nation. At the present moment an American ironclad is conveying to its final resting-place the dead body of a Chilian ex-President. It is not upon any ultimate designs of Germany that attention needs to fasten, but upon the indisputable fact that she will shortly possess a navy which in its aggregate none other than the British can withstand; and of which Great Britain herself must take grave account in all matters of external policy. The so-called Triple Entente is a recognition of this necessity. Already in one of its members, France, the question has arisen whether the battleship force, the solid infantry of the fleet, should not be concentrated in the Mediterranean, leaving to coast defenses and to the action of Great Britain, another member, the security of the Channel shores in case of a European war.

The question will naturally occur, how will these various conditions be affected by the formulation and acceptance of a treaty of arbitration between the United States and Great Britain as advocated by Sir Edward Grey covering every kind of differences, and rejecting explicitly every exception hitherto summed up under the words "vital interests and national honor"?

The reply is that no effect whatever is likely to be produced, except to intensify the resolution of Germany, unless

the result upon popular opinion in the United States and Great Britain is such as to incline each of the contracting States to recognize the necessary international policies of the other, and to give support in case of need. Since the days of Bismarck, Germany frankly and explicitly avows the supremacy of force as the means of securing vital interests and of maintaining national honor. The comment of the German Chancellor of the Empire upon the report of Sir Edward Grey's speech explicitly confirms this statement. Such avowal involves necessarily, from the very habit of mind whence it springs, an appreciation of the limitations of force; what it can accomplish and what it cannot. The consequence of this is diplomatic effort; combinations like those of a battle-field, albeit bloodless, based upon the recognition of common interests in the combining States and also in great measure upon the elements of weakness or dissension in others. The result, as far as successful, is concentration on the one side opposed to division on the other. Of these processes Bismarck in his day was a past master, nor does the hand of his successors seem wholly to have lost his cunning. The Triple Alliance, which he created, remains after more than thirty years one of the chief facts of international politics.

I should be unjust to Germany and to my estimate of her reasonable national necessities and of her important international position if I should not admit explicitly my conviction of the general correctness of her attitude in this respect. I do not hereby intimate any opinion upon particular actions; I speak only as a witness to general character as by me understood. I think, and have always thought, that the possession of force, of power to effect ends, is a responsibility—a talent, to use the Christian expression—which cannot by the individual man or State be devolved upon another, except when certain that the result cannot violate the individual or the national conscience. A general arbitration arrangement between Great Britain and the United States approaches this condition, because it is as certain as anything human can be that the two States will never again go to war; that their difficulties will always be settled peaceably. If there were no other reason, the interests and consequent sympathies of the British colonies, except perhaps those of Canada, would insure this.

It could be desired that differences between the two na-

tions should be submitted, not to a third, outside, party, but to a permanent tribunal composed of citizens of the two countries and of their colonies. Where differences are amenable to an existing law they can be referred to a tribunal of competent lawyers of whatsoever nationality, although the nearly even division between members of our highest tribunals upon questions of great importance compels the conclusion that acceptance of a judgment by the community is not the acquiescence of the intellect in a competent interpretation of law, but the submission of the will to a mere majority—of a court—a much lower sanction. But in questions of policy, like the Monroe Doctrine, or the fortification of the Panama Canal before the Zone became United States territory, or the position of Great Britain in Egypt, or of Japan in Manchuria, determination does not concern lawyers as such, but men of affairs; because, there being no law applicable, what is needed is a workable arrangement based upon recognized conditions. Such arrangement becomes a law for the period of its duration.

This is precisely the situation in which Germany finds herself, and has found herself. The questions pressing upon her, though conditioned by law, have been and are questions of national policy and imminent national interests. The unification of the Empire, the determination of its limits, the securing of conditions which should assure her weight in the councils of Europe, the extension of the sphere of German interests in the outside world, have been and are achievements of policy, accomplished against adverse conditions such as the United States and Great Britain have never known. To the effecting of them national power organized as military force has been and continues essential. Locked up in a territory narrow for its inhabitants, Germany must have an outlet for her industries secured by her own power, the only certain dependence. Her claims for such opportunity do not derive from law; and therefore, like many other questions, cannot in ultimate resort be settled by legal tribunals.

In conclusion, a word may be said upon the onerousness of armaments, so much insisted upon and so present to popular consciousness to-day. Undoubtedly armaments are costly, but the means to bear them have increased to a degree little realized if known at all.

In 1809 Great Britain was at the height of her single-

handed struggle against Napoleon. During that year Austria was again crushed at Essling and Wagram. Prussia remained in the utter subjection to France to which Jena, Eylau, and Friedland had reduced her in 1806 and 1807. Russia was the ally of France. The Spanish peninsula was flooded with French armies; a French King ruled in Madrid, another in Holland, while the royal family of Portugal was fugitive in Brazil. The Peninsular War was still in its beginnings, but in full blast. During that year the revenue collected in the United Kingdom was £63,719,400, supplemented by loans to the amount of £12,298,379; total, £76,017,779. The total expenditure was £76,566,013, of which the actual current expenses were £52,352,146; the remainder being interest upon the debt. Of the current expenses the military and naval were £48,210,957. The trade of the kingdom during this year, export and import together, amounted to £91,872,308. Excluding Ireland, the population in 1811, a census year, was 12,596,803.

A hundred years later, in 1909, the revenue collected was £151,578,295. The expenditure was £152,292,395, of which £59,028,000 was for Army and Navy. The trade, export and import, amounted to £1,094,485,426. The population, again excluding Ireland,* was 40,634,263. That is, with little more than thrice the population of 1809 there is nearly twelve times the commerce or four times as much per head; and while the total expenditure has doubled, increased by one hundred per cent., that for Army and Navy at this present period of gigantic armaments has increased by less than one-fourth, by less than twenty-five per cent.

It may be urged that the expenditure of 1809 was for actual war, which involves a disproportionate additional outlay over that of armament in peace. True, but this merely means that it costs much less to be ready for war than to go to war; another way of regarding Washington's maxim that preparation for war is the best assurance of peace. The thing to be observed is, that with an increase of nearly three hundred per cent. of trade in proportion to population there is only twenty-five per cent. increase in military expenditure. The increase of revenue collected approached one hundred and fifty per cent. in 1909, and has since exceeded that mark.

* Ireland is excluded in both cases because, though I have found its population stated for 1909, I have not for the earlier year.

These considerations are not advanced in order to contest that armament is a burden. They show only that the burden is not unbearable in itself, because it is very much less than has been borne. If it tends to internal revolt and to the breakdown of civilization, as Sir Edward Grey affirmed, it will not be because men cannot endure it, but because they will not.

The question for civilized men is whether, under all the world-wide conditions confronting this era, restiveness under the burden is a sign of progress or of decay.

A. T. MAHAN.